

STATUTORY INQUIRY INTO THE DEATH OF VICTORIA CLIMBIE

STATEMENT OF DAVID FREDERICK PEARSON Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service



- 1.1 I, David Frederick Pearson, make this Statement on behalf of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service ("CCPAS") as follows:
- 1.2 I am the Director of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service. I also act as a freelance consultant on child care issues and between 1986 and the present time have served as a Children's Guardian (formerly Guardian -ad-Litem). I have represented the Guardian service on an Area Child Protection Committee. I have over 30 years' experience in social work and social work management and specialised in child care matters for the whole of that time. Between 1979 and 1987 I was employed by the London Borough of Lambeth as Area Social Services Manager in Central Brixton. I am the author of numerous articles and publications on issues relating to child protection policy and practice.
- 1.3 **CCPAS originally registered as an interested party in relation to phase 2 of the Inquiry. The Inquiry has since decided that there will be no interested parties and have planned a series of seminars which we welcome. However, given the part played by churches in events preceding the death of Victoria Climbie, and the evidence given by church leaders to phase 1 of the Inquiry, we would ask that members of the Inquiry consider our comments generally on the role of the church in addition to the published questions. We feel this is particularly important as we are not aware of any other organisation who will be commenting in detail on these issues. Apart from this we have comments to make on the five seminar topics which are contained in Appendix 4 attached to this Statement.**
- 2.1 **Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service.** The mission of CCPAS is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children without fear of any kind of abuse and appropriately respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. In this respect the work of CCPAS is unique, supporting churches across denominations throughout the UK. On a limited basis we also provide direct help, guidance, support and counselling to individuals,

including children, affected by abuse. We are an independent charity supported in the main by voluntary donations, with assistance of core funding from the Department of Health and grants from charitable trusts etc.

2.2 CCPAS is the working name of PCCA Christian Child Care and is governed by a Council of Management consisting of individuals with a background in the church, management and finance, local authority child care and counselling. Almost a half of our Council of Management Members are from ethnic minorities and include the Youth Director of the largest black majority church denomination in Britain. A Reference Council has an advisory role. Members include national church leaders, the Chief Executive of the Children's Society, a former Deputy Director of Social Services and Health and Legal specialists.

2.3 Although not a large organisation, one of our strengths is the credibility we have both professionally and in the church/voluntary sector. As indicated, I also undertake freelance work on child protection and related issues. Our workers (paid and freelance) have senior management experience in child protection (eg two ex-ACPC Chairs, a CP Co-ordinator, and at senior level within the NSPCC) and work as a Children's Guardian. Others have extensive previous local authority and counselling experience.

3.1 **CCPAS services.** CCPAS has been providing child protection advice and support to churches, counselling and children's organisations etc since 1983. We seek to do this in relation to:

3.1.1. **Policies and practice.** Helping churches and organisations prepare and implement child protection policies and ensuring these are regularly reviewed and updated. Over the years we have pioneered the development of child protection policies in churches and other organisations and the principles developed have been adopted by many denominations and groups. This is true in a general sense and also in specific areas. For example, CCPAS pioneered a framework for working with known offenders in churches using contracts with individuals, etc which has since been adopted by the Anglican and Methodist churches nationally and by many others, as well as specialist agencies such as the Faithfull Foundation when working with churches in relation to offenders following a treatment programme. "Working Together to Safeguard Children", published by

government departments in 1999 states that churches (amongst other organisations) should have clear written procedures in place (paragraph 6.13). Churches are also expected by their insurance companies to have policies. The Charity Commission also require churches and other organisations working with children to have a written child protection policy in place before they will register a new charity. This requirement has resulted in many new churches (and other organisations) requesting our assistance. Our child protection manual, *Guidance to Churches* (recommended in the government publication "Working Together to Safeguard Children"), contains model policies and forms which can be adapted by local churches. I believe the hquiry may have a copy of *Guidance to Churches*. CCPAS would be happy to supply further copies if required. Some 31,000 copies of this manual have been sold or otherwise distributed in the last three years. We also provide a free consultation service to help churches prepare policies based on our own model or otherwise. Over the years several thousand churches have registered such policies with us. We provide an updating service to the manual, providing details of changes to legislation, new government guidance, CCPAS recommended practice etc.

3.1.2 **Helpline.** For some years we have provided a helpline (with an out of office hours service) for organisations and individuals. This operates on an 0845 national lo-call rate number. The helpline is advertised on the DoH website and published in advertisement form in church magazines and periodicals from time to time. These calls and others received via e-mail, through the post and personal contact, amounted to more than 6,000 enquiries in 2001. The amount of work in relation to each will have ranged from the giving of straightforward information to contact over many weeks and months.

3.1.3 **Training events.** Over the last ten years we have run more than a thousand child protection training and other events across the UK. These continue at a rate of about a hundred every year. A typical programme (attached as Appendix 1) includes such aspects as understanding the nature of child abuse, signs and symptoms, who to contact when there are concerns, how to respond to children, parents and alleged perpetrators, as well as aspects in developing a safe church environment, including the

preparation of child protection policies and procedures for appointing and supervising leaders, and safe practice issues. We have provided these programmes for Anglican and Catholic dioceses, Baptist Associations, Methodist, United Reformed, Pentecostal churches, other denominations, and independent churches of all descriptions.

3.1.4 **In-house training.** In addition to face-to-face training, we have developed a video training workpack and other resources which can be used by churches and organisations on an *in-house* basis. This material has been produced with generous assistance from the Department of Health. The workpack enables a church or organisation to provide a three-part training course to leaders and children's workers "in-house" and comes with an updating service and unlimited telephone support. We can also, on request, provide a CCPAS presenter to help churches use this training for the first time. The advantage of the video workpack training material is that this basic child protection course can be used over and over again as and when new workers are recruited. We have also developed a distance learning pack based on this material which is designed for individual study where preparation in a group is not possible. This material is used in relation to major events which involve recruiting workers from a distance for short periods of time and for other workers in isolated communities. See Appendix 2.

3.1.5 **Other services.** We provide counselling for leaders, children and adults before, during and after investigations as appropriate and have conducted management enquiries/reviews etc at the request of organisations following particular incidents of abuse. We also offer advice and support to denominational/organisational child protection advisors and to Social Services/Police investigating issues in religious communities and other groups.

- 3.2 **Current Priorities.** An important objective over the last couple of years has been to strengthen our links with black majority churches and other ethnic minority groups to ensure a greater take-up of our services. We have seen a significant increase in the number of black majority churches seeking our help and support, both in terms of developing child protection policies, training and help in regard to specific concerns. Another target group has been churches where doctrinal and other issues would appear to conflict with good child protection.
- 3.3 Over the years we have become aware of the overwhelming need for simple guidelines which are readily available to all working with children. As a result we produce laminated cards, comprising six panels, folding to credit card size, to conveniently fit wallets/pockets/handbags. The guides contain essential child protection information and details of helpline numbers, ie our own, NSPCC and ChildLine with a writing surface for recording new telephone numbers etc. These cards have been immensely popular with churches. In 2001 we distributed 35,000 copies. We have also been able to produce customised versions for particular denominations or groups and they have been used for major national Christian events. See Appendix 6 for examples of our general guide and one produced for a denomination.
- 4.1 **Victoria Climbié.** This evidence is, of course, submitted in relation to Phase 2 of the Inquiry. Our knowledge of the matters related to Phase 1 of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference is restricted to information gleaned from the Inquiry's website or from the press. So far as I am aware, we had not had any contact with the churches involved with Victoria Climbié or her carers prior to the events in question. However, on 14 August 2001 Louise Johnson of the Universal church of the Kingdom of God purchased a copy of our video workpack and we used this opportunity to offer our services to the church generally but this was not taken up. Contrary to the impression which may have been given by Mr Lima in his evidence this agency was not directly involved in the training though this was offered. The pack is designed for use by churches with or without the involvement of an experienced child protection trainer. More recently (17 January 2002) I wrote to the church reiterating our availability to offer help, training and advice in all matters related to child protection but to date we have not received any response.
- 4.2 Without wishing to be overly critical of the particular churches which had some contact with Victoria and her carers, CCPAS would like to make a number of

observations about child protection practice in this case. It should be acknowledged by way of mitigation that Victoria and her carers had only limited contact with the churches concerned. The churches had, albeit in a misguided way, attempted to show pastoral care to a very disturbed and frightened little girl. Despite all the criticisms that may be directed against them, the Christian people in question at least made some connection with Victoria and her aunt. They got closer to Victoria than all the official child protection agencies and this makes their failure all the more tragic.

- 4.3 The primary failure in relation to child protection would appear to be that church leaders, having observed on Victoria obvious bruising and signs of neglect, failed to make a referral to the statutory authorities. Associated with this is the fact that, latterly, when Victoria was clearly seriously unwell, church leaders relied on Marie Therese's partner, Carl Manning, to take Victoria to hospital.
- 4.4 The churches showed a lamentable lack of awareness of the fact that Victoria's disturbed behaviour might be indicative of abuse. A significant reason for this lack of alertness to child protection issues may be that the church leaders bought in, uncritically, to the notion that Victoria was demonized and this blinded them to the abuse. Although it seems that Victoria herself believed that she was "evil" and "possessed" this should have been seen as a childish response to sustained emotional and psychological cruelty. By accepting, without question, this interpretation of Victoria's evident disturbance the church effectively colluded with the abuse. To categorize a severely disturbed child as "possessed by the Devil" is an extreme example of blaming the victim.
- 4.5 A further failure demonstrated in this case was the inappropriate and unsafe way that church leaders responded to Marie There's allegations that Victoria was being sexually abused by Carl Manning. Irrespective of the reliability or otherwise of Marie Therese's testimony, serious allegations were being made which needed to be properly and thoroughly investigated. To simply assume that these allegations were fabricated, especially in the light of Victoria's presentation, was highly dangerous practice.
- 4.6 Evidence given by church representatives at the Inquiry indicate that the culture within the churches concerned was not one that was particularly child-centred. One pastor talks about Victoria being sent out of the main service to a children's

group where the children were encouraged to do drawing and sit quietly. Marie Therese was offered help and advice by the church workers but little was available to Victoria. Church leaders took on trust what was said by Marie Therese about Victoria's problems whereas nobody paid much attention to what Victoria was doing or saying. In fact, nobody really listened to Victoria throughout.

- 4.7 The failures outlined above and reported in more detail in Part One of the Inquiry are perhaps not surprising given the fact that the church to which Marie Therese took Victoria latterly had no child protection policy. The church leaders moreover had not received any child protection training as part of their qualifying training or later in their ministries. There were no written procedures or guidance available for children's workers in the church and no formal arrangements for supervision and support for these front line workers. The denomination does not appear to have been supportive to the particular church caught up in these tragic events and it is not clear whether those who gave evidence to the Inquiry have had the opportunity to work through, in a supported way, the painful issues raised by this case. Prior to this child protection does not appear to have even registered on the church's agenda and, as such, the church was woefully unprepared to deal with a pastoral problem of such magnitude and complexity.
- 4.8 There are immense difficulties in generalizing from this one case to child protection practice in all the churches across the United Kingdom as a whole. Whereas it is undeniable that there are churches and Christian groups which continue to be very lax with regard to safeguarding children, there are, on the other hand, many churches with high standards of policy and practice. At CCPAS we are in contact with churches from all denominations and of all shades of theological opinion who are conscientiously addressing these issues and who are struggling to deal with child protection within the church in a rigorous but sensitive and child-centred way.
- 4.9 The voluntary sector is characterized by diversity and this is particularly true within churches. There is a lack of information about what local churches are doing in relation to child protection and systems of accountability and monitoring, where they exist, are varied in the extreme. It is probably fair to say that the larger traditional denominations tend to have more highly developed policy and procedural guidance than do other groupings, especially independent groups who may be unknown to the statutory agencies. However, having a policy in itself isn't necessarily enough, it is the implementation of the policy at the local level which is

of the greatest significance in protecting children from harm. At CCPAS we strongly encourage local churches to both adopt their own policy (usually based on denominational guidelines) and keep it under constant review. We also urge churches to integrate child protection with all their activities and to offer training and support to those directly involved with children in church. At the end of the day it is attitude and awareness which is as important as policy and procedure.

- 4.10 In the light of evidence to the Inquiry regarding the lack of child protection training in preparation for Christian ministry, CCPAS commissioned a survey of Bible and theological colleges with a view to discovering whether or not this was the general picture. I wrote to Principals of ninety-nine colleges providing full-time training for a year or more. The Principals were made aware that I intended to use the results of the survey in a Statement to the Inquiry. To date responses have been received from two thirds of the colleges surveyed. However, the response rate varied; only 33% of independent and Pentecostal colleges as compared to an average of 63%. This was in spite of sending out reminders to all those who had not replied and the implication that a no reply was likely to be regarded as a nil return for the purpose of this exercise. However, the lack of response could be that the theological colleges have no interest in child protection and/or cannot see the need for introducing such policies. Others may no longer be operating and within the time constraints of the survey it has not been possible to check further on 'no replies'.
- 4.11 Only 50% of the colleges who responded to the questionnaire provide any form of child protection training (32% of all those surveyed). In some cases where colleges reported providing some training, it was apparent that selective information had been provided, ie relating to courses where child protection issues are taught and not listing those where the subject is not addressed. There was great variation in the time spent on training, ranging from ten minutes to twenty hours over courses of between one and three years. An analysis of the responses suggests there is an apparent lack of training/awareness among independent, interdenominational, pentecostal and Roman Catholic colleges in particular.
- 4.12 In the main, college lecturers are responsible for child protection training; it is not clear what skills they have in this area. About a quarter of the colleges who responded to the survey had someone specifically responsible for child protection issues. It would seem that more than half of the colleges had no plans to use the

new Criminal Records Bureau disclosure service available from April 2002, though many asked for additional information on this from CCPAS.

- 4.13 Students selected for training will in many cases be placed in churches to gain practical experience and eventually be appointed as ministers or childrens workers. It is clear from the survey and anecdotal feedback over time from ministers, childrens workers and students that child protection training is seriously neglected on the vast majority of training courses. On the positive side, the questionnaire promoted a great deal of interest from colleges, with some being very open about their weaknesses in a lack of appropriate training and policies. CCPAS propose sharing results of the survey with colleges and offering help and support in addressing issues raised.
- 4.14 I am aware from evidence given to the Inquiry that Mrs Mensah, one of the Pastors, received training at Spurgeon's College in South Norwood. The Certificate in Pastoral Studies is a part-time course. Spurgeon's College did not give any information about this course in their response to our survey, possibly because it is a part-time course. Mr Orone, another Pastor, stated that he undertook his theological training at Kensington Temple. Kensington Temple is a large church (reputed to be the largest in London). This training course was not listed as a full-time course for more than a year and was not therefore amongst those surveyed.
- 5.1 **CCPAS views and recommendations.** CCPAS are of the opinion that there is a legal and procedural framework, spelt out in successive Government guidance, which, if properly resourced and implemented, has the potential to prevent a large proportion of child abuse and neglect. The sad fact that not all child abuse is preventable should not deter us from making every effort to safeguard children from harm and to promote their welfare. So far as Christian churches are concerned their role and responsibility in relation to child protection is a supportive one. They occupy an intermediate position between the statutory authorities and the individual citizen and their responsibility is primarily to pass on any child protection concerns they may have to the appropriate investigating authorities. They should consider themselves to be part of the local child protection network and should develop close links with the relevant statutory authorities.

5.2 The role and responsibilities of Christian churches in child protection are restated below:

5.2.1 **Working Together to Safeguard Children.**

- Churches need to work together with statutory agencies in their locality in order to ensure that children are kept safe from harm
- Churches should be considered to be part of the child protection network and therefore, as voluntary agencies having contact with children, they fall within the remit of Area Child Protection Committees for communication and consultation on policies and procedures
- Churches should be able to access ACPC training at an appropriate level in the same way as other voluntary agencies within the locality

5.2.2 **Children at Church.**

- Individual Christian churches should adopt a child protection policy in line with Government guidance: Safe from Harm 1993 and Working Together 1999
- Churches should ensure that all of their members who have responsibilities (paid or voluntary) for working with children and young people are familiar with the policy and have opportunity for training in child protection

5.2.3. **Training Christian Ministers.**

- All those who are involved in any form of ministry which brings them into contact with children should be trained in child protection as part of their initial and updating training

5.3 These major principles of the churches' role in child protection are now well accepted. The challenge for churches is to implement them at the local level. This will involve not only having sound child protection policies and procedures in place but also having workers and volunteers who are competent in carrying them out.

This Inquiry offers the opportunity to underline the importance of churches taking child protection seriously.

DAVID PEARSON – 6th February 2002

Appendices:

1. **CCPAS sample Programme “Facing the Unthinkable” seminar**
2. **Sample video workpack training programme**
3. **CCPAS workers’ pocket guides**
4. **CCPAS Response to issues raised in seminar topics**

**SEMINAR - CHILD ABUSE AND THE CHURCH
Facing the Unthinkable**

Seminar Programme

This day seminar is of particular value to church leaders, youth and children's workers, and will help others such as counsellors, to develop a greater awareness of the problem of abuse, both for adults and children. The aim is to help churches and organisations respond more effectively to children who may have been abused and to develop policies and safe practice to ensure the protection of children in organisations and minimise the possible risk of false allegations against workers.

9.30am	Registration and coffee	
10.00am	Introductions and today's programme	David Pearson
	Setting the scene	
	Acknowledging the pain	
	How our understanding of abuse has developed	
	Definitions of abuse	
11.15am	Investigations	Pauline Pearson
	Signs and symptoms of abuse	
	Who to contact	
	Helping a child to talk about abuse	
12.00 noon	Role of Church (illustrated by a case study & pairs exercise) to	
identify:		
	Sharing with Social Services	Pauline role play
	Responding to the child	
	Responding to parents	
	Responding to perpetrator	
	David to discuss	
12.30pm	Developing a safe church environment	David Pearson
	Preparing a child protection policy	
	Appointing and supervising leaders	
	Developing safe practice	
	Helping children protect themselves	
1.00pm	Lunch (provided)	
1.45pm	Developing a safe church environment continued	David Pearson
2.45pm	Finish	
3.00-4.30pm	The Westminster (RC) Diocese will be looking at the application of these principles to the Parish. Others have the option of leaving at 2.45pm or remaining for this session.	

This is a highly concentrated programme covering a great deal of material. Each participant is provided with a booklet containing detailed notes of the seminar content and a great deal of other information besides. For those wanting more information on any of the aspects covered by the seminar, we do have a range of books, tapes and other resources which will be on sale at the seminar or available by post.

This is our recommended programme. The timings can, of course, be varied to suit the requirements of the church or group.

OUTLINE PROGRAMME FOR VIDEO PRESENTATION

9.45 am Registration and coffee ("20 Questions" to be given to participants on arrival)

10.15 am **SESSION 1**

- Introductions
- Video - Part 1: first section
- Whole group discussion
- Video - Part 1 second section
- Group exercise

11.30 am **Coffee**

11.45 am **SESSION 2**

- Responses to child's drawing (from video)
- Video - Part 2
- Definitions of abuse - signs and symptoms
- Answers to *20 Questions* exercise
- Reflecting back exercise Group discussion

1.00 pm **Lunch**

1.45 pm **SESSION 3**


- Recap on morning session
- Video - Part 3
- Devising a child protection policy and looking at various information sheets
- Workshop

3.30pm **QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

4.00pm **End**

Laminated pocket guides - reduced in size to fit onto the page.


General card – side 1

<p>Important telephone numbers Your child protection co-ordinator</p> <p>name _____ tel. _____</p> <p>Deputy child protection co-ordinator</p> <p>name _____ tel. _____</p> <p>Social Services child protection team</p> <p>tel. _____</p> <p>Police child protection team</p> <p>tel. _____</p> <p>Useful helplines CCPAS: 0845 120 45 50 ChildLine: 0800 1111 (for children) NSPCC: 0800 800 500</p> <p>Ensure you record names and numbers.</p>	<p>CCPAS can help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 hour helpline (0845 120 45 50) • advice and support in child protection matters • helping churches develop child protection policies/safe practice guidelines • training courses • video work pack and other 'in house' training material for you to use • other relevant resources • helpful web site: www.ccpas.co.uk <p>Our work is strongly supported by the DoH and Association of Chief Police Officers (Crime Committee).</p> <p>© CCPAS is part of PCCA Christian Child Care Charity no. 1004490 company no. 2646487</p>	<p>Protecting children and young people</p> <p>Good practice guide for children's workers and leaders</p> <p>Please note: This is for quick reference only</p> <p>This is not a substitute for your child protection policy - so make sure you are familiar with the details of your <i>full policy!</i></p> <hr/> <p>Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ Tel: 0845 120 45 50 Email: info@ccpas.co.uk Web site: www.ccpas.co.uk</p> 
--	--	--

General card – side 2

<p>Good working practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treat all children/young people with dignity and respect • respect personal privacy • be available, but ready to refer to someone more experienced • be sensitive to the needs of others and their likes/dislikes • avoid questionable activity eg. rough/sexually provocative games and inappropriate language • follow accepted guidelines/policy** relating to contact with children/YP and in all other respects • challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations / suspicions of abuse <p>**CCPAS can advise</p>	<p>Responding to a child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen - and keep on listening • don't ask questions • don't promise confidentiality • accept what you hear without passing judgement • tell the child what you are going to do • make careful notes (the circumstances, what the child said, what you said etc) as soon as possible (preferably within an hour). Include dates and times of incident/recording and keep safely. • contact the person responsible for child protection concerns or in their absence take action yourself • don't talk to others 	<p>Concerns/allegations must be reported to your child protection co-ordinator who should:</p> <p>Where physical/emotional abuse or neglect is suspected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact social services in case of deliberate injury or if concerned about a child's safety or if a child is afraid to return home. Do not tell the parents • seek medical help if needed urgently, informing doctor of any suspicions • lesser concerns (eg. poor parenting) encourage parent/carer to seek help (but not if this places child at risk of further injury) <p>Where sexual abuse is suspected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • always contact social services/police • never tell the parents • don't talk to others
<p>Be good role models - examples for children & young people to follow</p>	<p>Listen and pass on - do not question or investigate</p>	<p>Contact CCPAS if unsure what to do or if you want support</p>

Example of custom made card – side 1

<p>Important telephone numbers Your child protection co-ordinator</p> <p>name _____ tel. _____</p> <p>Pastor of Church</p> <p>name _____ tel. _____</p> <p>Social Services child protection team</p> <p>tel. _____</p> <p>Police child protection team</p> <p>tel. _____</p> <p>Useful helplines CCPAS: 0845 120 45 50 ChildLine: 0800 1111 (for children) NSPCC: 0800 800 500</p> <p>Ensure you record names and numbers.</p>	<p>CCPAS can help you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 hour helpline (0845 120 45 50) • advice and support in child protection matters • helping churches develop child protection policies/safe practice guidelines • training courses • video work pack and other 'in house' training material for you to use • other relevant resources • helpful web site: www.ccpas.co.uk <p>Our work is strongly supported by the DoH and Association of Chief Police Officers (Crime Committee).</p> <p>© CCPAS is part of PCCA Christian Child Care (Charity no. 1004490 company no. 2646487).</p>	<p>Protecting children and young people</p> <p>Good practice guide for children's workers and leaders</p> <p>Keep this with you for quick reference</p> <p>This is not a substitute for your child protection policy - so make sure you are familiar with the details of your <i>full policy!</i></p> <hr/> <p>—Reduced for the New Testament Church of God</p> <p>Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ Tel: 0845 120 45 50 Email: info@ccpas.co.uk Web site: www.ccpas.co.uk</p> 
--	---	--

APPENDIX 4

Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service Evidence to the Statutory Inquiry in the death of Victoria Climbié



CCPAS Response to issues raised in Seminar Topics

There are issues which we would like to raise which don't naturally fall within the remit of the seminar topics and these we have addressed elsewhere. However, some of the questions are pertinent to CCPAS's goals and these are commented upon in more detail below.

As a general point there are a number of references in the Invitation for Submissions to "the wider community", "the community at large", "society", "the general public" and "individual citizens". We would like to see a greater acknowledgement of the important role of voluntary agencies -and churches in particular- in the protection of children. We believe that Part One of the Inquiry demonstrated very clearly that there is a great deal more work to be done in persuading churches of the importance of child protection and in strengthening their links with statutory child protection agencies.

1. Discovery and Inclusion

- (ii) How can the wider community be encouraged to participate in this process?

Churches across the country are in contact with large numbers of children and families. They are sometimes in contact with vulnerable people who may not be known to the statutory agencies. Some churches and Christian agencies work with asylum seekers and refugees. The black majority churches play a particularly central role in the lives of many people of African Caribbean origin. All these churches and groups should be encouraged to take the protection of children seriously and everything possible should be done in order to develop and maintain positive, open and confiding relationships between them and the statutory child protection agencies.

2. Identification

- (ii) How can the protective circle for children be extended so that the wider community is fully aware of child protection issues and the role that individual citizens can play in protecting children?

Churches can and should play a part in raising awareness of child protection both within their congregations and in society at large. They can do this by modeling positive relationships within their community, by supporting those who are parents and by teaching about child welfare and children's needs. The ethical teaching of the Christian church is a powerful incentive to individual citizens to take their social responsibilities seriously. For example, Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan urges compassion for those in need (especially when they are different from ourselves) and argues against walking by on the other side.

3. Determining Requirements

- (ii) Are changes needed to current training programmes? If so, which training programmes and for which groups of staff?

Training is a crucial issue in child protection and we make some recommendations about training elsewhere. So far as churches are concerned we believe that those in pastoral leadership and those with particular responsibilities for children's work should be offered child protection training. There are particular advantages in having some foundation training alongside people from other agencies (such as the training provided by ACPCs) as this also builds up relationships within the local child protection network and fosters a partnership ethos.

- (iii) How can agencies best organize themselves and the way in which they handle their initial responses to concerns about children, regardless of whether those concerns are raised by another professional agency or a member of the public?

The initial response to a referral about a vulnerable child is extremely important as it is likely to have a great influence on the future trajectory of the case and its final outcome. Decisions made at the point of referral about the relative urgency of the

concerns expressed will determine the timescale of the response and this is critical where a child's safety may be at risk. In other situations what may appear initially to be a very minor concern may later be revealed as a significant child protection matter.

Feedback we receive from churches indicates that, when they do make a referral about a child in need, they would like to be kept informed of the outcome and would like, where possible, to be involved in any plan of intervention to meet identified needs.

Feedback from our training courses indicates that there is a more general issue about sharing concerns about a child in the absence of a precipitating incident or crisis (a child who may be experiencing chronic neglect for example). Health Visitors and Education professionals report that they have been instructed not to share information about children and families with other agencies, unless the matter is clearly defined as "child protection". Their point is, at this early stage, in the absence of any particular incident or injury (ie most neglect and emotional harm cases), they are not in a position to know whether this is a child protection matter or not. It is precisely because they are worried about possible neglect that they are wanting to refer the child/children to Social Services and to initiate some form of inter-agency sharing of information and concerns.

The usual route for referral into the child protection system triggers a set of procedures (initial enquiries, strategy discussion, Section 47 visits/interviews) which are incident-based. As almost all families where there are serious deficits in child care have support services already in place, the method of fulfilling the Local Authority's obligations under Section 47 of the Children Act must be different. An inter agency meeting, perhaps undertaken as a Strategy Discussion, could commission the core assessment required to decide *whether* the children are at risk of significant harm from the ongoing oversight of aspects of care within the family.

There would appear to be a conflict here- in the perceptions of professional child care workers- between the requirements of new human rights and data protection legislation on the one hand and effective inter-agency working on the other. In our opinion the needs and rights of children have to be given priority and professionals and others should be encouraged and empowered to share their

concerns (whether for children in need or for children at risk of harm) at the earliest possible opportunity in some form of inter-agency meeting.

4. and 5. Service Provision and Monitoring

The CCPAS view is that there is a legal and procedural framework, spelt out in successive Government guidance, which, if properly resourced and implemented, has the potential to prevent a large proportion of child abuse and neglect. The sad fact that not all child abuse is preventable should not deter us from making every effort to safeguard children from harm and to promote their welfare. So far as Christian churches are concerned their role and responsibility in relation to child protection is a supportive one. They occupy an intermediate position between the statutory authorities and the individual citizen and their responsibility is primarily to pass on any child protection concerns they may have to the appropriate investigating authorities. They should consider themselves to be part of the local child protection network and should develop close links with the relevant statutory authorities.

We have had experience of Working Together at the local level which has been very effective in safeguarding children from harm. There are some excellent examples of agencies, both statutory and voluntary, working together in creative partnerships for the sake of children. It would be entirely regrettable, in our view, if this partnership working which has taken so long to build up were to be jeopardized by further radical changes in the way services are organized and delivered. There is significant evidence that organizational change can itself be hazardous for vulnerable children as concerned adults may find it more difficult to know how, and with whom, to share their concerns. We encourage churches to build up links with child protection agencies within their localities as we are convinced that these local networks, when they are working effectively, have a vital part to play in protecting children.

STATUTORY INQUIRY INTO THE DEATH OF VICTORIA CLIMBIE

SECOND STATEMENT OF DAVID FREDERICK PEARSON Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service



- 1.1 I, David Frederick Pearson, make this Second Statement on behalf of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service ("CCPAS") as follows:
- 1.2 In my previous Statement dated 6 February 2002, I made reference to the survey CCPAS was in the process of carrying out to discover the numbers of hours devoted to child protection training in theological and Bible colleges. The survey also looked at areas covered in the training, qualifications and experience of tutors, and various child protection policy issues.
- 1.3 The survey included responses received up to and including 11 February 2002. The final report was published today. As further last-minute responses were received after my previous Statement, I am for the sake of completeness attaching the full Report, though the additional information does not change in any way the general picture conveyed previously.

DAVID PEARSON
12 February 2002

REPORT ON THE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE CCPAS CONCERNING CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING IN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES



1. Introduction

The survey was undertaken on behalf of the CCPAS to provide a 'snapshot' of the attention given to child protection issues in training for the Christian ministry, given matters raised in the inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. This inquiry is currently sitting under the chairmanship of Lord Laming and CCPAS are submitting evidence on the role of churches and Christian leaders in child protection

2. Methodology

The survey sought to discover the number of hours devoted to child protection training and aspects covered on a course-by-course basis. The following areas were specifically identified but Colleges were invited to add additional areas:

- * Recognising signs and symptoms of abuse
- * Responding to suspicions
- * Child protection agencies - roles and responsibilities
- * Church child protection policy and practice issues
- * Legal/confidentiality aspects

Other questions raised concerned the qualifications and experience of the tutors providing any training, plans to develop the training currently available, whether the College has a child protection policy and intentions relating to the use of criminal record checks which are expected to become available from April this year.

The database used for contacting individual Christian Theological Colleges was extracted from the UK Christian Handbook. Only those running full time courses of at least a year's duration were approached. We recognise that this might not be a complete list of all such training institutions. We also made the assumption that if the courses surveyed did not include child protection training, then it is unlikely that part time ones would. A questionnaire, together with a covering letter, was prepared, samples of which are attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. A further letter was sent to all those who had not responded to the questionnaire stressing the importance of the survey. A copy of the second letter is shown as Appendix 3. Colleges were encouraged to respond as a non-reply might be interpreted as a nil return.

99 questionnaires were sent out and 68 were returned. A breakdown on a denomination basis is given below.

	No. sent	No. returned
Independent/Nondenominational	39	17
Pentecostal	7	4
Roman Catholic	11	10
Anglican	17	15
Methodist	6	6
Church of Scotland	1	1
Baptist	6	6
URC	3	3
Church of the Nazarene	1	1
Seventh Day Adventist	1	1
Lutheran	1	1
Salvation Army	1	1
Presbyterian	4	1
Unitarian	1	1
TOTAL	99	68

3. Analysis

An analysis was undertaken on a denomination-by-denomination basis. The results would indicate if there were any differences between different denominational colleges. Some Christian Theological Colleges are joint denominational e.g. Anglican and Methodist. For the purpose of the report, the assumption was made to only include a response once and the results would be included in the apparent main denomination.

3.1 Independent/Nondenominational

Of the 17 returns, only 9 give any child protection training on their courses. The time spent on training varied from 10 minutes to 1 day. The content of 8 programmes cover all items stipulated. One college does not teach child protection issues on its MA course. One did not cover legal and confidentiality issues and one did not cover signs/symptoms of abuse; how to respond to children and child protection agencies. 12 have someone specifically responsible for training in child protection.

6 colleges had a child protection policy on placement in churches, 4 had policies regarding issues in the college and 6 had a designated individual with child protection responsibilities.

3 colleges were planning to use the CRB services and have already made enquiries to become a Registered Body. 8 have requested more information from the CCPAS and one will be working through an outside agency.

One college said that they were unable to give the type of detailed treatment required by the CCPAS. Their role was to train preachers and pastors.

3.2 Pentecostal

Of the four colleges who returned the questionnaire, three relate to separate pentecostal denominations and one is independent. Of these one gives no training, one has an hour's training with only one of the points covered, one has over two hours plus an exam with all points covered on content but for a diploma course only – its degree course was not mentioned. One gives between 3 and 5 hours of training. This College serves students from overseas who will return on graduation to their countries of origin and the Course includes international and cultural considerations. Three Colleges have people responsible for training in child protection.

Two have a child protection policy within the college with a designated person responsible. The remaining two has neither policies nor a person responsible.

Two colleges plan to use the CRB for student placements. Three have asked CCPAS for more information

3.3 Roman Catholic

We surveyed 11 colleges listed in the Christian Handbook but appreciate there may well be other seminaries. Although 10 responded, only three completed the questionnaire; the remaining 7 sent responses by letter. From the information received on the forms only one is giving training on Child protection (in Scotland - on a specialist course). This college does not include all areas recommended by CCPAS. There is no indication as to whether the courses were part or full time but all involve working with children.

One College responding by letter requires students to study the Diocesan Child Protection Guidelines and provides one child protection session a year with an outside speaker but no further details of this are given. The same College also plans to access CRB checks through the Catholic registration body being established – others responding to this question indicated they had no plans to use CRB checks but have asked CCPAS to give more details.

Three Colleges say they work with their Dioceses on Child Protection issues, one has no policies, two are still working on sending in a return and one is a higher education institution and does not train people for the ministry.

3.4 Anglican

Of the 15 replies, 10 completed the questionnaire. The remaining ones sent comments by letter or by telephone. Only the ones who sent a reply were analysed as comments by letter/telephone were very subjective and consequently difficult to analyse.

9 colleges give child protection training with the content in line with the questionnaire. The amount of training time varied from 2 to 15 hours. One did not cover child protection agencies and one did not cover recognising signs and response to children. All have someone responsible for training in this area.

7 colleges have child protection policies for children, 6 have policies relating to Child Protection issues relating to the college and 6 have designated an individual with child protection responsibilities.

6 are planning to use the CRB, 3 have applied for registration as a registered body and 3 have requested more information from the CCPAS.

3.5 Methodist

Two colleges did not return a questionnaire and replied by letter and another with a phone call. In each case we were referred to the Methodist Child Protection Policy and given insufficient information to be included in this survey.

Of the remaining three, child protection training on the full time courses ranged from 2 hours to 20 hours. These three had someone responsible for providing the training and the material covered all the contents except one who did not cover legal and confidentiality aspects.

These 3 colleges had a child protection policy on placement in churches. Only two had a policy for within the college and one had designated individuals inside the college responsible for child protection issues.

Two Colleges said they were planning to use the CRB services probably through a Registered Body via the Methodist church. The other college is still considering

3.6 Church of Scotland

The Church of Scotland sent in a nil return

3.7 Baptist

One College did not return the form but said in a letter that they meet the Baptist Union's requirements (unspecified). Of the five that returned the form, all included training on child protection. The time spent ranged from 3 hours to 9 ½ hours. All five colleges covered all aspects of child protection and all had someone who was responsible for training. Interestingly, all colleges will be extending the amount of time given on Child protection.

Only one of the 5 colleges had any Child protection policies/procedures and another referred to working within the Baptist Union procedures.

All 5 colleges plan to use the CRB and will work with the umbrella group within the Baptist Union. One has requested more information from CCPAS.

3.8 URC

One response was given by letter and CCPAS was referred to the Website for information. The results from this college have not been included in this report.

One college spends 9 ½ hours on child protection training and covers all the content stipulated. The college is considering increasing the time on training. There is a person/agency responsible for training. The other college does not undertake child protection training on its courses but uses an outside source every two years.

One college does not have any child protection policies but are considering.

Both colleges will work within its denomination regarding CRB services and one has asked CCPAS for more information.

3.9 Church of the Nazarene

The Church of the Nazarene college spends 5 hours training per course on child protection on all its courses except postgraduate courses. The courses include all points stipulated. A tutor is responsible for training

The college has child protection policies for students on placement and they have a designated individual responsible for child protection policies.

The college plans to use the CRB and details are currently being worked out. They have asked for more information from CCPAS.

3.10 Seventh Day Adventist

The Seventh Day Adventist College spends between 1 and 14 hours on child protection training. Only the 14 hours training session covers all the content covered by the questionnaire. The college has a person responsible for training on campus and has had training from the CCPAS.

The college does not have child protection policies but does have a person responsible for child protection issues.

The college plans to use the CCPAS for the CRB services.

3.11 Lutheran

The Lutheran college spends 2 hours training on child protection and cover all points except child protection policies. An agency is responsible for training.

They do not have a college child protection policy and plan to use the CRB. They have asked for more information from the CCPAS.

3.12 Salvation Army

The Salvation Army College undertakes training on all of its full time courses and deal with all the areas stipulated over a 3 hour period. They have a person responsible for training.

The college has child protection policies and plan to use the CRB. All students are said to undergo a police check.

3.13 Presbyterian

The college sent a brief letter to the effect that they provide no training on Child Protection issues.

3.14 Unitarian

The return from the college indicates that they have no child protection training within the college but training is available to all students within the denomination. The Church has someone responsible for providing this training.

The college has child protection policies/procedures but no information was given with regard to the CRB.

3.15 Summary of all returns

Child Protection training

- * 35 (approximately 52 % of responses and 35 % of those surveyed) colleges provide some training
- * The length of training varies between 10 minutes and 20 hours
- * There is an apparent lack of training/ awareness among the independent/interdenominational, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic denominations
- * Those responsible for training were usually tutors and it is not clear what skills they have on child protection issues.
- * Of those providing training, almost all covered the content as determined in the questionnaire.
- * Of those who did not give training, 4 were academic colleges of Higher education (or similar) and considered that they had no need to give specific training on child protection issues.

College child protection policies/procedures

- * 52 % of the colleges who responded to the survey and 35 % of those surveyed have policies/procedures relating to child protection. Some colleges have only partial policies covering specific items on the questionnaire.
- * 30 % of the colleges who responded to the survey and 19 % of those surveyed have someone specifically responsible for child protection issues.

Disclosure of Criminal Records (CRB)

- * 40 % of those who responded to the survey and 27 % of those surveyed plan to use the services offered by the CRB either directly or via an agency
- * 44 % of those who responded to the survey and 30 % of those surveyed have asked the CCPAS for more information.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Response rate

Whilst there was a good response rate generally to the questionnaires, the Independent and Pentecostal response were poor, only 43% as compared to an average of 69 %. This was in spite of sending out reminders to all those who had not replied and the implication that a no reply would be regarded as a nil return for the purpose of this exercise. The lack of response could be that the Theological Colleges have no interest in child protection and/or cannot see the need for introducing such policies. Whatever the reason it is disappointing that there was not a greater response especially as the Victoria Climbié case has highlighted a lack of systems within an independent and perhaps Pentecostal church. It is also possible that some of the colleges may no longer be operating and within the time constraints of this survey it has not been possible to check further on 'no replies'.

It was encouraging to note that the mainstream denominations as well as some of the smaller ones have sent in returns and would appear to have been very honest in their answers and realise that they have much work to do on child protection issues.

4.2 Training

The amount of training given varies both in terms of standards and amount of time given. The importance of child protection training cannot be stressed enough and it is disappointing to note that only 52 % of colleges who responded to the questionnaire do any form of training. It was impossible within the time scale to verify the full time courses offered by the colleges. However, there were indications that some colleges may have been selective in only reporting on courses where child protection issues are taught i.e. not listing others. There was a great variation in the time spent on training and it would be difficult to see how a such complex issue as child protection can be covered in a ½ hour, once in three years. These issues have been followed up and the colleges have been asked for a syllabus and other details but so far only one has responded.

Although some colleges appear to have been defensive, others have been very open, thanking the CCPAS for raising issues, realising that they need to do more

Most colleges have a person responsible for training but there was no information given on the skills, knowledge and expertise of the trainer

4.3 Policies and procedures

There also appears to be a lack of child protection policies within colleges and only 30 % have someone specifically responsible for these issues. Some have referred CCPAS to their denominational headquarters for them to respond. This would indicate that they might be passing on the responsibility on child protection issues to their Headquarters. It was difficult to assess the skills and qualifications of those responsible and what training they have had. In any event the number of colleges who do have such a person is disappointingly low.

Most denominations and independent churches have named individuals in local churches to coordinate child protection concerns but a similar approach does not appear to have been adopted in colleges even within denominations with an otherwise good track record in child protection policy terms. For example, how do colleges select students who will ultimately be working with children; how are they prepared and equipped for practical placements and future ministry and how would concerns or allegations in relation to a student be responded to from a child protection point of view? Colleges need to be up to at least the same standards regarding child protection as the churches where students are being placed.

4.4 The Criminal Records Bureau

On the positive side, the questionnaire has generated a lot of interest with many colleges asking CCPAS for more information regarding the CRB and the formation of procedures and policies. This must be encouraging. Some colleges have been very open about their weaknesses and this gives the CCPAS and other agencies a basis on which to build for the future.

5. Recommendations

There is still an enormous amount of work to be done with existing Theological Colleges regarding child protection issues especially amongst the Independent and Pentecostal Churches. It is recommended that these colleges be contacted again by the CCPAS to see if they need help in any way. The message of child protection should also be promoted with the established denominations and the CCPAS are in a good position to do this. More publicity is needed and the proposed press release seems to be a good way of alerting the public and the churches to do something proactive about the situation. All churches and Theological Colleges need to learn from the tragic case of Victoria Climbié.

Specific recommendations are: -

- 5.1 To publish the report and send to all theological colleges who were surveyed
- 5.2 That all colleges should be encouraged to conduct an audit, which should be undertaken by an appropriate, qualified person in child protection terms.
- 5.3 That an assessment be made on all the trainers in order to ensure that they have the necessary expertise and skills to undertake this task.
- 5.4 That CCPAS make available, and make colleges aware of, all of its training material to enable them to undertake any training, which may be required on a regular basis.

John Ball
11 February 2002

The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service is an independent Christian charity providing professional child protection advice and support to churches and organisations across the UK

PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent BR8 7UQ. Tel: 0845 120 45 50. Fax: 0845 120 45 52

www.ccpas.co.uk E mail info@ccpas.co.uk

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

21 December 2001

Dear Principal

The Victoria Climbié Inquiry

As you will be aware from the media, a statutory Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié is currently being held under the chairmanship of Lord Laming. The Inquiry has been divided into two phases. The first primarily backward-looking and concerned with events leading to the child's death, to be completed this month. The second phase in the New Year will be concerned with wider questions. It will be forward-looking and directed to the question as to what recommendations might profitably be made which may help avoid, so far as possible, a tragedy of this sort happening again.

Victoria's carers had links with various churches and as a result a number of church leaders were required to give evidence at the Inquiry. One of the issues raised concerns child protection awareness and training within the church, and in particular whether this formed part of the witnesses' theological training. I will be giving evidence in phase two of the Inquiry and I will need to address these issues.

In view of the importance of this issue, I would be very grateful if you could spare some time to complete the attached questionnaire so that I can form an accurate picture of what is currently being provided (or planned) by theological colleges and Bible schools in the UK. This letter is being addressed to colleges and schools offering full-time study of at least a year in length. I propose to prepare a general report and will not be identifying individual institutions unless with your permission this would be helpful in, for example, mentioning areas of good practice which could perhaps be of particular help to the Inquiry and to others.

In case you had not previously been aware of this agency, CCPAS is an independent Christian charity working across denominations and children's organisations throughout the UK. Our mission is to help churches, organisations and families create a safe environment for children and to respond to the needs of individuals who may have been abused. We help churches to formulate child protection policies and safe practice and run about a hundred training and other events throughout the country every year (this includes the training of clergy and other leaders for a number of Catholic and Anglican Dioceses). We also provide a helpline which includes an out of office hours service. We are primarily supported by voluntary donations with grant aid also from the Department of Health and Trusts.

I realise you are likely to be very busy as the new term commences but I would be grateful if you could return the questionnaire to me by **18 January 2002** at the very latest.

With many thanks.

Yours sincerely

DAVID PEARSON

STATUTORY INQUIRY INTO THE DEATH OF VICTORIA CLIMBIE

PHASE 2: SEMINAR ON IDENTIFICATION

Submission by David Pearson

Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service



1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 I am the Director of the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS). I also act as a freelance consultant on child care issues and between 1986 and the present time have served as a Children's Guardian (formerly Guardian -ad-Litem). I have represented the Guardian service on an Area Child Protection Committee. I have over 30 years' experience in social work and social work management and specialised in child care matters for the whole of that time. Between 1979 and 1987 I was employed by the London Borough of Lambeth as Area Social Services Manager in Central Brixton. I am the author of numerous articles and publications on issues relating to child protection policy and practice.
- 1.2 I filed Statements on behalf of CCPAS on 6th and 12th February 2002. The first addressed issues relating to the role of churches in the events preceding the death of Victoria Climbié and generally in child protection. Amongst other matters, I acquainted the Inquiry with details of a survey being carried out by CCPAS to discover the extent of child protection training in theological colleges. The Second Statement served merely to file a copy of the survey's final report published on 11th February 2002.
- 1.3 CCPAS is the only Christian professional child protection organisation providing independent specialist advice, support and training across churches and parachurch organisations throughout the UK. Where requested, we also seek to provide support to religious leaders of other faiths and to secular organisations. Information about CCPAS as an organisation and the services we provide is contained in some detail in my First Statement to the Inquiry. This submission seeks to specifically address issues related to the planned seminar on identification. However, we would not wish this contribution to be seen in isolation from our comments on the wider picture contained in the Statements referred to.
- 1.4 As detailed in our first submission, CCPAS workers have extensive experience in statutory child protection agencies. However, this response examines specifically the role of the Christian church, though we recognise that much of what we say will have a relevance to other faith communities, places of worship and community groups.

1.5 It may be stating the obvious, but the church is not one organisation, but a diverse collection of different groups and independent entities operating across the spectrum of society. Umbrella bodies such as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, the Free Church Federal Council, the Evangelical Alliance and so on, represent churches of particular constituencies but none speak on behalf of all. The strength of CCPAS is that as an independent charity we owe no allegiance to any particular set of doctrines or structures. We seek to work with all, but some churches will more easily use our services than others. As in other communities, there are churches and sects which are exclusive in the way they operate and appear to be entirely closed to the outside world. Such institutions, of course, raise particular concerns when it comes to identifying children at risk as there will be a reluctance to involve outside agencies in any way.

2.0 THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN CHILD PROTECTION

2.1 Apart from schools, the church, collectively, probably works with more children than any other organisation. In this sense, as a service provider, the church has a duty to ensure the protection of children in its care. Additionally, leaders and workers will be working with vulnerable children and young people, some of whom will be victims of abuse, or children regarded as being "in need" under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

2.2 It should be recognised that churches can be extremely dangerous places for children. After all, the church is probably unique in working with children, and those who abuse children, within the same four walls. CCPAS are aware of reports which would suggest that in some areas between half and three quarters of known sexual offenders monitored by police and the probation service attend a place of worship on a regular basis. Sadly, there have also been many cases of children being abused by church leaders. Churches therefore should be in the forefront of child protection and many have highly developed child protection policies and procedural guidance, with training available for workers, taking the issue very seriously. At the other end of the spectrum there are many others who are extremely lax and in some cases irresponsible in their approach to child protection. CCPAS sees part of its mission as continuing to raise an awareness of child protection issues throughout the church and beyond. This involves helping leaders and workers identify children in need of protection and to respond appropriately where there are concerns.

- 2.3 Churches also have a “social service” function. In many communities people will seek help, guidance and support from churches and this will often be the first contact an individual will have with a helping agency. In other cases individuals will turn to the church when health and social care agencies appear not to have an answer to a need. In particular, black majority churches have an excellent track record in this area of service. Help from churches is also available evenings, weekends, Bank Holidays, when other places are closed. We know that churches are used in this way because leaders will ring our out-of-hours helpline, seeking advice on child protection and related issues.
- 2.4 Some people approaching churches for help do so because they do not trust the statutory and other voluntary agencies. This will be particularly true of churches serving ethnic minorities and those on the margins of society. What this means in practice is that churches will often be serving vulnerable children and their carers who may have limited or no contact with the formal agencies. The role of the church is essentially a supportive one. In the majority of family circumstances, churches will be providing support from their own resources and encouraging parents and young people to make contact with voluntary and statutory agencies where appropriate. The responsibility of the church is to pass on any child protection concerns to the appropriate investigating authorities. Churches should consider themselves and be considered as part of the local child protection network and maintain close links with the statutory agencies.

3.0 CHURCHES AND IDENTIFICATION

- 3.1 As related in my First Statement, churches can and should play a part in raising an awareness of child protection, both within their congregations and in society at large. They can do this by modelling positive relationships within their community, by supporting those who are parents and by teaching about child welfare and children's needs. The ethical teaching of the Christian church is a powerful incentive to individual citizens to take their social responsibilities seriously. For example, Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan urges compassion for those in need (especially when they are different from ourselves) and argues against walking by on the other side.
- 3.2 At CCPAS we constantly stress that child protection is “everybody's responsibility”, not just that of leaders, children's workers and others with designated responsibilities within the church or group. We place an emphasis on involving the wider church in child protection training programmes and strategies. To this end,

we have produced a half-hour video "A Duty to Care", which can be used to raise awareness of the issues, in addition to a three-part training video workpack or face-to-face seminars for workers. An awareness of child protection needs and responsibilities across any community is perhaps the most important ingredient in identifying children who may be victims of abuse.

- 3.3 Children and young people should be included, too, in awareness-training programmes in a way that is sensitive, taking into account their age, understanding and needs. Materials produced by this agency and others such as Kidscape have been used to help children develop personal safety skills. Children should also be made aware of policies for protecting them within the church or organisation and know that there are adults and helplines available to them should they want to discuss concerns. Preparing children in this way will assist them in identifying and reporting abusive behaviour in relation to themselves or others. Within a particular faith community there is a natural trust in the leadership on the part of the parents and the churches are therefore in an ideal position to provide such programmes.
- 3.4 Developing effective child protection policies, good practice guidelines, child protection training, safe recruitment, staff training and support, and access to specialist help and support is vital in any organisation serving children, especially churches. CCPAS produce a comprehensive child protection manual, "*Guidance to Churches*", recommended in "*Working Together to Safeguard Children*", which contains a model policy and forms which can be easily adapted by local churches. We suggest that churches then submit draft policies to ourselves and their local Social Services Department for comment. Again, it is our experience that as churches develop such policies, they grow in their capacity to identify and respond to the needs of children at risk. We are aware of this because as a result of our input in all these areas, churches start to contact our helpline about concerns which have not previously been identified or reported.
- 3.5 The benefit of telephone helplines cannot be underestimated. Churches and other groups serving children often will not phone the statutory services in the first instance. Maybe this is because they lack confidence in the services which exist, fearing over- or under-reaction, (sadly, Inquiries of this nature do not assist in this respect), they may lack confidence in themselves or their judgement of a situation or fear raising issues officially. People like this ring us every day and, where appropriate, we help the individual to report the concerns appropriately and, if needed, remain in the background to provide on-going support to the leader through the process. We encourage churches to advertise helplines widely, to include details of their denominational child protection officer (if they have one),

Social Services, the Police child protection team, CCPAS, NSPCC and ChildLine numbers etc. This breadth of choice is, in our view, vital.

- 3.6 As mentioned in 3.2, it is also important to stress the role of the individual and the wider community in child protection. Although we encourage churches and other organisations to have child protection policies, in particular naming specific individuals who will co-ordinate concerns and ensure appropriate action, we accept that some policies will sometimes fail. It is therefore important to stress the role of the individual, ensuring there is appropriate follow-up. In our model policy we state:

It is, of course, the right of any individual as a citizen to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies or seek advice from CCPAS, although we hope that members of the church will use this procedure. If, however, you feel that the co-ordinator or deputy has not responded appropriately to your concerns, then it is open to you to contact the relevant organisation direct. We hope by making this statement that we demonstrate the commitment of the church to effective child protection.

Unfortunately child protection policies can be misused to keep "the lid" on things. No policy should rely upon the performance of a single individual or agency. Access for children and adults to multiple points of help and support is therefore important.

- 3.7 Child protection policies and procedures are only as effective as the people who operate them. The danger is, that churches can acquire policies because the denomination, government, Charity Commission and insurance company all say it is a good idea but lack any real commitment to their implementation. Policies and good practice guidelines should be living documents and regularly monitored and reviewed. As such items regularly feature on staff meeting agendas and workers are involved in developing good child protection practice, then they are more likely to become aware of children in need. Where these things do not exist, the converse is likely to be true.
- 3.8 There has been a tendency to develop policies in churches and other organisations from the top down, where the over-riding drive has come from the need to protect the organisation rather than the child and workers have not felt understood or supported. Over the years we have structured a model child protection policy based on the needs of children and workers in the local church or group and sometimes, in larger organisations, developing this from the bottom upwards. This is the emphasis in our training in both face-to-face seminars and the video workpack material as well as other resources. It is our submission that such an

approach enables workers to identify needs more readily and to understand their own role in child protection.

- 3.9 We know from contacts we receive on a regular basis that some denominations and groups with the most sophisticated child protection policies have in effect no training at all on the ground. This coupled with the information we have previously filed concerning the lack of training of prospective ministers and clergy in their theological colleges raises very serious issues in terms of appropriately equipping the church in these areas. Having said this, many of the same points could be raised in regard to workers in other fields, because in our church-based training sessions teachers, doctors and others often bemoan the lack of training in their own professions.
- 3.10 Child protection is, of course, just one of the many issues with which children's workers inside the church have to deal. In all the complexity of child protection guidelines and other things, workers need simple readily available information which is easily understood. The pocket guides we have produced are one means of helping leaders to work safely with children and respond appropriately when there are concerns. An example of a laminated worker's pocket guide was attached by way of an appendix to my Statement of 6th February. This guide contains information relating to the church or organisation's child protection co-ordinator and contact telephone numbers for Social Services, Police Child Protection Team, and other agencies mentioned in para 3.5 above. It is our view that such aids contribute to the identification of children in need and perhaps have a wider application.

4.0 FACTORS WHICH MIGHT INHIBIT IDENTIFICATION

- 4.1 Clearly the opposite to a lot of what we have been presenting in this paper inhibits the identification of children in need. Some examples are given below:
- Sects or groups which lack accountability and which are exclusive by nature, not relating to the rest of the community
 - Christian groups which promote a mistrust of the secular authorities and the corresponding reluctance to work in partnership for the sake of children's welfare with some believing that allegations of abuse should be dealt with internally
 - An unbalanced interpretation of Christian doctrine which is used to justify the subjugation of women and children, a denial or minimisation of their rights and, in extreme circumstances, the demonisation of such individuals

- An over-emphasis on the control of children which can be associated with harsh discipline
- A lack of awareness of the risks to children based on naivety about people's good nature
- Dangerous assumptions such as *people in our community would not abuse children* or that a display of repentance and granting of forgiveness following acts of abuse means that an adult no longer poses risks to a child
- A lack of priority given to the protection of children and a reluctance on the part of some leaders to get to grips with the challenges of implementing sound child protection policies and practices
- Lack of child protection awareness, guidance and training

4.2 Other inhibiting factors are common to other agencies and community groups. One of these, in our view, relates to an interpretation of child protection requirements which have effectively distanced children from adults – eg children should not be touched, seen on their own, etc. This can be a greater problem outside the church, for example infant school teachers report at seminars not being allowed to hold the hands of five year olds and restrictions on the use of essential medical treatments. In our view this can be counter-productive, making it less likely that abuse will be discovered. Over the years CCPAS have developed guidelines for safe physical contact with children, seeing them on their own when necessary etc.

4.3 Another example is the apparent effect of the new emphasis on data protection and human rights. We have received numerous reports of individuals not reporting child protection concerns either because they feel they have to acquire the permission of the parent or carer, or to tell them in advance of contacting Social Services or the Police Child Protection Team. At training seminars we advise that where a child could be placed at physical risk or in all cases of alleged sexual abuse, advice should be sought from Social Services before the parents are informed (probably by the authorities). This view is constantly challenged by teachers who say they have been advised to inform a parent first, regardless of circumstances. It has not been possible to track down the source of this advice; a frequent explanation is that the head teacher was informed of this at a conference. *Working Together to Safeguard Children* sets out the key principles involved when sharing information (Section 7.27 – 7.46), but in our experience this issue is widely misunderstood and needs to be addressed by Area Child Protection Committees with possibly further guidance from government.

4.4 *Working Together to Safeguard Children* emphasises the fact that it is only when information from a number of sources has been shared and is then put together that it becomes clear that a child is at risk or suffering harm. CCPAS have encouraged churches to share concerns with Social Services, emphasising this fact and that their information could, in effect, be the missing piece in a jigsaw. However, information from local authorities recently has suggested that Social Services now feel inhibited about keeping generalised information on their files, given requirements of the Data Protection Act. Balancing child protection needs with the rights of individuals in relation to information on official records, is not easy and may well benefit from further clarification and guidance.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 In final submissions to Phase 1 of the Inquiry, Counsel for Victoria's parents listed statutory regulations for churches in a list of concerns. Margot Boye told the Inquiry, *"Having heard the evidence from several churches, it cannot be left to the churches to take on a welfare and child care role..... if some sort of statutory regulation is not looked at there can be little doubt that some churches and religious institutions will continue to act in a manner that is totally at odds with the child's welfare."*

5.2 As already stated, all churches should have policies and safe practice for working with children which are fully implemented, and regularly updated and reviewed. Any encouragement from any source to this effect is to be welcomed. However, in our view, it is doubtful that statutory regulation would be effective. Sadly, the statutory procedures which exist already did not save Victoria. The major principles of the church's role in child protection are understood. The challenge for churches is to implement them at local level. This would not only involve having sound child protection policies and procedures in place but also having workers and volunteers who are competent in carrying them out. This Inquiry offers the opportunity to underline the importance of churches taking child protection seriously.

DAVID PEARSON

Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service